United Nations A/60/723

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 March 2006

Original: English

Sixtieth session
Agenda item 131
United Nations common system

Mobility and hardship allowance

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Generai Assembly the text of a statement adopted by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination at its second regular session of 2005 on the issue of mobility and hardship allowance.

06-27368 (E) 170306

Statement by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the mobility and hardship allowance

1. A mobile workforce has become a critical success factor for all organizations operating in the international environment. The organizations of the United Nations common system operate in 179 countries and 627 duty stations worldwide. An increasing number of these duty stations are classified as hardship locations, where staff are confronted, on a daily basis, with deteriorating security and public health situations and generally challenging conditions of life.

2. Particularly in recent years, many organizations of the common system have put in place policies that seek to enhance staff mobility. These policies can lead to the desired results only if they are accompanied by an effective system that encourages staff mobility by providing incentives and rewards to those who are geographically mobile and are required to take up assignments in hardship duty stations. This is all the more important in the light of the increasing number of staff who are part of a dual-career couple and whose mobility is subject to the prospects for suitable spouse employment.

3. Given these organizational requirements, the review and revision of the mobility and hardship allowance scheme has been of great and strategic importance to organizations and staff of the common system, especially as it was introduced at a time when organizations were increasing their efforts to enhance the mobility of their staff inside and between organizations. Organizations and staff therefore strongly disagreed with the decision taken by the International Civil Service Commission at the outset of the review process, at its fifty-ninth session in July 2004, to decouple the mobility and hardship allowance from the base/floor salary scale.

4. At the same time, it is recognized that the subsequent review process was of a collaborative nature and took into account a number of the concerns of the organizations of the common system. Therefore, and notwithstanding their disagreement with the Commission's decision to decouple the allowance scheme from the base/floor salary scale, executive heads wish to express their support for the new scheme proposed to the General Assembly. Executive heads believe that, on the whole, the Commission's proposals are in line with the overall reform objectives. The new flat-rate scheme will meet organizations' business needs by providing incentives to staff required to be mobile and to serve in hardship duty stations. At the same time, the new scheme will represent a simplification in that it will be easier to administer and will also be more transparent to staff.

5. Executive heads also support the proposed increases in the hardship element and the introduction of an additional mobility category for staff on their seventh and higher assignment. It is regretted, however, that as a result of the Commission's goal of overall cost neutrality, in some instances the increases in the hardship element would be offset by a reduction in mobility and non-removal allowances.

6. Furthermore, executive heads strongly support the proposal to continue the mobility allowance for staff at duty stations classified as "H" and "A" locations. They attach great importance to this aspect of an effective mobility and hardship scheme and firmly subscribe to the need to make a clear distinction between

considerations that relate to mobility and those that relate to hardship. For staff members who spend a large part of their careers changing duty stations, homes and professional and personal environments, the tangible and intangible impact of mobility on their lives remains the same, regardless of the hardship level of the duty stations. Moreover, executive heads believe that the inclusion of "H" and "A" category duty stations is of significant strategic importance for the purpose of encouraging and increasing inter-agency mobility, which in the case of some organizations may include moves between headquarters locations and "A" category duty stations.

7. In conclusion, executive heads urge the General Assembly to approve the new mobility and hardship allowance scheme for implementation as from 1 July 2006.